



**Testimony of:**

Alicia Sillars, Youth Director, Darien Youth Commission and  
Co-Chair, Darien's Thriving Youth Task Force (TYTF)

*concerning funding for Regional Action Councils in*

H.B. No. 6824 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH  
2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFORE AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE.

*Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services - March 6, 2015*

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana, Representative Dillon and members of the Appropriations subcommittee, my name is Alicia Sillars. I am offering testimony in strong opposition to the proposed cuts to the regional action councils. My primary role in the community is as the Youth Director for the Darien Youth Commission. In addition, a great deal of my attention is focused on my role as Co-Chair of Darien's Thriving Youth Task Force (TYTF). The TYTF is a coalition of students, parents, school representatives, town staff, elected officials, community organizations and service providers who are all dedicated to addressing asset development and at-risk behaviors in our young people in Darien.

In our community, *Communities 4 Action* (formerly Lower Fairfield County Regional Action Council) has been equal parts leader, guide and support in the area of substance abuse prevention and education in the Town of Darien. In addition to being the go-to organization for resources available (again in the areas of prevention AND education), *Communities 4 Action* is ever mindful of grant opportunities which the TYTF can use to enhance an already vital presence in this community.

Partnering with *Communities 4 Action* offers, the TYTF successfully implemented the Search Institute's (40 Developmental Assets) Resources & Assets Survey to students in grades 7 - 12 in the Darien Public School system in 2008, 2011 and 2014. This invaluable needs assessment tool offers insight into the self-perception these young people have of their world - and their roles in that world - including behaviors, thoughts and attitudes. The results subsequently create an opportunity for an open dialogue between our students and those adults in our community who are responsible for guiding their social, emotional and educational well-being.

In addition to working closely with Darien, *Communities 4 Action* has successfully brought together neighboring and similar communities for broader education, exposure and opportunities. Coordinating our efforts to support healthy/thriving youth development and our quest for substance abuse prevention in our young people is both a key and critical role that *Communities 4 Action* plays. Without this coordination, there would surely be as much duplication as there would be gaps in services.

As our voices in Hartford, it is your obligation to advocate for the continued funding for *Communities 4 Action*. This financial support is imperative to sustain the programs which foster thriving youth development and substance abuse prevention...programs synonymous with *Communities 4 Action*. Thank you.

